

Aug. 21, 2009

## Health and school officials issue flu guidelines for parents

Sarasota County Emergency Management, the Sarasota County Health Department and the Sarasota County School District provided a briefing Thursday afternoon about H1N1 (Swine) Flu preparations for the 2009/10 school year. Health Department officials say this virus is widespread in the community and they expect flu activity when schools re-open Monday, Aug. 24

“School and Health Department officials are reaching out to parents and school staff to provide information to promote a healthy school environment,” said William Heymann, M.D., F.A.C.E.P, the medical director for the Health Department. “It is important that parents keep their children home from school if they become ill. This means that working parents should have a plan for child care if their child becomes ill.”

The School District has worked closely with the Health Department to train and equip health room staff, nurses and other school staff on ways to reduce the spread of the H1N1 (Swine) flu virus. “Our plan is flexible and may change as warranted,” said Lori White, Superintendent of Sarasota County Schools. “We are following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Sarasota County Health Department on any decisions that would impact schools. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.”

The School District has worked with the Health Department to address H1N1 (Swine) Flu concerns during the 2009/10 school year:

- School staff will identify students exhibiting flu-like symptoms, who will be evaluated by the health room aide or school nurse, and isolated if necessary.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up their children. The School District will make hand sanitizers available for use in classrooms under the supervision of adults.
- Building supervisors will continue efforts initiated in the spring to frequently clean commonly touched areas (doorknobs, light switches, handrails, etc.)

Students with influenza-like illness **must remain at home for at least 24 hours** after their fever is gone (without fever-reducing medicine). A fever is a temperature above 100 degrees. Parents, especially those of medically fragile children – those with ongoing health issues such as asthma, diabetes and other diseases and illnesses -- are urged to seek medical care from their doctors or health care providers.

Health Department and School District officials will continue to work together using a computerized monitoring system to track student symptoms and attendance; this tool, along with reports from staff, will help determine if additional action is warranted. Parents will be notified using the district's automated telephone message system.

Health Department and School District officials recommend actions everyone can take to reduce the spread of H1N1 (Swine) flu:

1. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of an elbow.
2. Wash hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel, especially after coughing and sneezing.

Do not touch eyes, nose or mouth. Avoid contact with those who are ill.

These topics will be included in a telephone message to parents. In addition a letter to parents will be distributed by school officials on the first day of school. The same information will be posted on the Sarasota County School District Web site:

[www.sarasotacountyschools.net](http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net).

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